

# THE JAPAN MARITIME SELF-DEFENSE FORCE IN THE AGE OF MULTILATERAL COOPERATION

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## Nontraditional Security

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**I**saiah Berlin's essay *The Hedgehog and the Fox*—made famous by the adage “The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing”—explores the pros and cons of a highly focused defense strategy.<sup>1</sup> The hedgehog curls up in a ball and defends itself. Hiroshi Doi, former professor at the National Defense Academy of Japan, advocates a “hedgehog-style defense” for Japan, claiming that the country's postwar security policies can still defeat any “sly fox” confronting the nation.<sup>2</sup> However, given the emergence of an increasingly complex global security environment, it may be argued that Japan's “defense-only defense policy” is no longer valid. Indeed, must Japan remain a hedgehog forever?

The security environment surrounding Japan grows ever more complex

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and diversified, combining traditional and non-traditional security challenges as never before. China's robust and growing antiaccess/area-denial (A2/AD) capabilities and North Korea's burgeoning nuclear weapons arsenal are dire threats to Japan's economic survival and very existence. In addition, a wide array of nontraditional threats, including transnational terrorism, drug trafficking, and persistent attacks in the cyber domain, undermine the peace and stability of the Asia-Pacific region. Recently, natural disasters, including earthquakes, tsunamis, typhoons, and pandemics, have proved much more deadly and almost always require military responses in the

form of humanitarian assistance / disaster relief (HA/DR) operations. If Japan is to meet these challenges as well as fulfill its duties as a “responsible stakeholder,” the roles, missions, and force structure of the Japan Self-Defense Forces (SDF) must be modernized.

On 1 May 2012 American and Japanese leaders issued “U.S.-Japan Joint Statement: A Shared Vision for the Future” declaring, “Japan and the United States pledge to fulfill our roles and responsibilities by utilizing the full range of capabilities to advance regional and global peace, prosperity and security.”<sup>3</sup> This reflects the growing expectation that Japan will help promote peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region through its close alliance with the United States. To attain a responsible stature in international society, Japan needs to take actions to enable it to perform its responsibilities relating to security more comprehensively. Constantly changing domestic and international security paradigms make it necessary for the Ministry of Defense and the SDF to deepen the Japan-U.S. alliance and strengthen its effectiveness. Because Japan’s national interests are closely tied to the sea, the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF), a flexible, responsive, and sustainable naval force, stands at the forefront of the defense of the nation and plays a central role in the Japan-U.S. relationship with regard to defense cooperation. It can be argued that the alliance could wither and collapse unless the JMSDF adapts to these changing times by revising its outmoded defensive strategy and adopting new roles and missions.

There are many new roles and missions that the JMSDF needs to perform in the future. Preparing to meet nontraditional challenges is of the utmost urgency, because such activities can be implemented immediately, do not violate constitutional restrictions, and help Japan fulfill its international obligations. The proposed concept of the “Noncombat Military Operation,” or NCMO (pronounced “Nocomo”), should be a minimum and realistic step for Japan to become a more responsible international power.<sup>4</sup>

In a prior study based on the *National Defense Program Guidelines for [Fiscal Year] FY 2011 and Beyond* and lessons learned from the Great East Japan Earthquake, recommendations were made for the rapid development of sea-based capabilities (i.e., amphibious lift and corresponding logistics support) as a defense requirement for Japan today.<sup>5</sup> Sea basing is a key capability if disaster-prone and insular Japan is to face nontraditional challenges. However, to date, there has been no systematic analysis of the extent to which the JMSDF can actually perform activities in the nontraditional security fields utilizing sea-based capabilities. It is therefore necessary to determine which roles should be played by the JMSDF in the nontraditional security fields.

This article describes the diverse capabilities required by the JMSDF under the rapidly evolving security environment and focuses on the requirements of

sea basing. It begins by analyzing America's amphibious capabilities, including its evolving roles and missions, and then examines Japan's duties in terms of the Japan-U.S. alliance. Lastly, it recommends a new role for the JMSDF utilizing sea basing.

### NEW CAPABILITIES REQUIRED FOR THE JMSDF

First, Japan must develop the will as well as the capability to cope with its security challenges unilaterally. That is the right of every nation and the primary responsibility of its military forces. Tackling the broad array of security challenges outlined previously is largely beyond the capability of any one military force, even that of the United States. That is why multilateral cooperation is so important, particularly for naval forces. Accordingly, it is necessary, in addition to deepening the strong Japan-U.S. alliance, to promote multilateral cooperation between the JMSDF and its neighbors during peacetime. Military forces today routinely gather at the sites of natural disasters around the globe to support disaster relief. Host nations lack the organic capacity to meet the emergency needs of their populations in the face of widespread destruction. Japan is obligated to join such efforts. Japan is simply unready to face alone the aftermath of a major earthquake centered in a large urban area like Tokyo. International support under such circumstances is necessary, and the JMSDF must be able to work with international forces sent to help. Therefore, to meet its responsibilities at home and abroad, Japan requires capable naval forces that are maintained in the highest state of material readiness and manned with crews prepared to perform a broad array of HA/DR missions, whether unilaterally or in concert with allies and partner nations.

Given Japan's pressing financial situation, the JMSDF will find it challenging in the near term to develop the requisite sea-base and amphibious capabilities. The most realistic approach would be to focus on existing defense capabilities and maximize their effectiveness through innovation, comprehensive planning, strenuous training, and close cooperation with the United States. Furthermore, a multilayered approach is necessary, taking advantage of the distinctive characteristics of the entire range of available forces, including military, civilian, governmental, and nongovernmental agencies. The most important thing for the advancement of multilateral cooperation is the establishment of trust. More concretely, to establish trust globally and specifically in the Asia-Pacific region, it is necessary for Japan to assist and cooperate seamlessly with other countries in times of difficulty, and diplomatically express its opinions and take actions from a responsible position.

The most common threat in the region is undeniably major natural disasters. That was made apparent following the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011 and Super Typhoon Haiyan, which struck the Philippines in November 2013. In both

cases, military forces proved invaluable for rendering aid.<sup>6</sup> Thus, training for HA/DR activities in peacetime not only fosters friendship and trust among regional neighbors but enhances the operational proficiency of international forces working together for humanitarian purposes.

Moreover, training in preparation for such situations is an important expression of national will and commitment to protect one's homeland. Even with increased multilateral cooperation, a country needs to maintain the ability to protect its sovereignty through initiative.

In a widely known 1979 work, Ken Booth classified the capabilities of naval forces as military, diplomatic, and policing roles.<sup>7</sup> In the future, the JMSDF needs a fourth capability—civil roles. This means the JMSDF should begin focusing on the lives and welfare of the Japanese people in times of duress. For a country with limited national resources, not fully exploiting all military capabilities in peacetime equates to wasting resources. Any organization, either military or civilian, that fails to account for the welfare of the citizens is derelict in its duties in a democracy. If the JMSDF is to perform both its military and civil-defense roles successfully, it will need to acquire new capabilities while maintaining them in the highest state of readiness.

The centrality and force structure of U.S. amphibious forces offer an important lesson for the SDF. Japan's acquisition of organic naval amphibious forces will ensure improved multilateral cooperation with the United States and a rapid-response force that is capable in times of crisis. Congressman J. Randy Forbes has argued that the United States needs to renew its amphibious capability that has been neglected over the last decade while fighting two wars, in Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps, despite tight budgetary constraints, executed BOLD ALLIGATOR 2012, the largest amphibious training exercise in ten years. The exercise showed the importance of integrating military forces, civilian agencies, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). It also emphasized the synergy between the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps, and reaffirmed the importance of a robust amphibious capability in the U.S. national defense strategy. The rising importance of sea power in the Asia-Pacific region, particularly amphibious power, is a critical enabler of the U.S. strategic rebalance toward the region.<sup>9</sup> In other words, the utility of amphibious operations has been reaffirmed by the United States as well as Japan. The JMSDF should improve interoperability with the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force while developing a more capable amphibious force.

Joint-force documents of the United States divide amphibious operations into a number of categories: assaults, raids, demonstrations, withdrawals, and support to other operations (like HA/DR).<sup>10</sup> It would not be realistic for Japan to attempt to develop all these competencies to the same level as the United States.

Rather, it should prioritize the defense and safety of Japan, and facilitate the diffusion of responsibility for humanitarian responsibilities to the international community. Therefore, minimum requirements should consist of a limited amphibious assault capability for defending and regaining control of small islands and archipelagoes and providing amphibious support to other operations. The latter in particular may be helpful for deterring disputes and military threats, as well as addressing challenges in nontraditional security fields.<sup>11</sup> These capabilities should be pursued by the JMSDF in peacetime because these sea-based capabilities are also very effective in HA/DR operations.

### THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SEA BASE, AND CHALLENGES

With regard to sea basing, one of the most important defense capabilities Japan requires today, there are the lessons learned from the international HA/DR response to the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. The U.S. Naval War College monograph *Waves of Hope* summarizes the lessons of large-scale joint efforts involving organizations such as the United Nations, armed forces dispatched from a number of countries, and NGOs, and it analyzes the “hard power” assets involved and “soft power” effects. First, sea basing minimizes the friction between local indigenous populations (arising from religious, cultural, or ideological differences) and intervening military personnel deployed ashore. Second, transfer of personnel and supplies from a sea base to shore by helicopters and air-cushion landing craft (LCACs) facilitates effective relief operations in disaster areas where basic infrastructure is limited or the capabilities of local government to respond are greatly reduced. Third, HA/DR efforts directly or indirectly help to improve diplomatic efforts between countries strained by ideological differences, as demonstrated by Indonesia’s improved relationship with the United States following 9/11. Finally, the presence of the U.S. military helped to reassure regional allies that a rapidly rising China could not silently fill a geopolitical vacuum caused by the improved U.S. commitment to the Middle East.<sup>12</sup>

These lessons had a considerable impact on U.S. diplomatic and military strategies for the Asia-Pacific region. They also led the U.S. Navy to recommit itself to increased multilateral cooperation while recognizing the magnitude of the HA/DR impact on diplomatic relations, as well as the utility of power projection from a sea base.

On 17 January 2012, the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff issued the *Joint Operational Access Concept*—a major initiative to develop effective joint operational capabilities. This document showcased the importance of sea-based platforms for collection, maneuver, and logistical support to operations ashore.<sup>13</sup> In pursuit of this concept, the U.S. Navy is developing a new class of naval vessel, the mobile landing platform (MLP). The first ship of the class, USNS *Montford Point* (T-MLP 1),

is 785 feet long, and has a full-load displacement of 78,000 tons, a speed of fifteen knots, and a range of around nine thousand nautical miles. One of its principal features is a hull based on tanker designs and built to commercial rather than military standards. Although it lacks advanced damage-control systems, its cost is significantly lower than previous military-standard designs, and it can support three LCACs. Likewise, an MLP off the landing site can receive supplies from “connector” vessels and support operations ashore. When all its supplies have been offloaded by LCACs, an MLP can move to a safe area to be resupplied or stand by to backload forces from ashore.<sup>14</sup> Recent reports suggest the U.S. Navy plans to deploy three MLPs.<sup>15</sup>

In addition, the U.S. Naval Sea Systems Command is currently developing plans for a megafloat-type Intermediate Transfer Station (ITS). This sea platform can berth multiple vessels. When its components are connected, the ITS forms a large sea base capable of landing and recovering aircraft. It can also serve as a base for LCACs while serving as a landing pad for helicopters and flying boats.<sup>16</sup> Finally, the Office of Naval Research is developing a high-speed Transformable Craft, or “T-Craft,” with extended cruising range and carrying capacity, to utilize the concept of a sea base in a more practical way.<sup>17</sup>

With the U.S. Navy’s sea-base plan as a reference, what kind of sea base should be adopted by Japan? The core of such a plan could be a composite force termed the “Sea Stability Fleet.” It would be a cost-effective, sea-based collection of various existing military and civilian vessels that could be assembled into a task force that is scalable, rapidly deployable, and well suited to support interservice, interagency, and NGO efforts.<sup>18</sup>

One possible interim solution is the development of an MLP-like capability using megafloats. A megafloat was constructed in 2002 to demonstrate how nascent commercial technologies could be employed to extend Haneda Airport. This megafloat was later disassembled and transferred to Shimizu City in Shizuoka Prefecture, to Minami Awaji City in Hyōgo Prefecture, and to Minami Ise Town in Mie Prefecture.<sup>19</sup> The megafloat could be easily adapted as a sea base for HA/DR activities in and around the home islands. Another solution would be turning to the private sector, especially NGOs. By means of a “private finance initiative,” the diversity and flexibility of NGOs can be effectively exploited for the development and maintenance of public facilities. Under such an initiative, the government would contract with NGOs to operate private cargo carriers, ferries, and roll-on/roll-off ships. Synergy could then be achieved among military, civil, and private agencies, even with limited resources, personnel, facilities, and funds. In particular, cooperation with NGOs, which in the past have historically had limited partnerships with the JMSDF, could be a driving force in improved interoperability and positively reinforced civil-military relations.

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF AMPHIBIOUS CAPABILITY, AND CHALLENGES

Successful amphibious lift from a sea base is also a capability that is necessary if Japan is to conduct a NCMO effectively from the sea. On 5 January 2012, President Barack Obama announced new strategic defense guidance emphasizing the importance of power projection.<sup>20</sup> This guidance included Navy power-projection capabilities in relation to the Air-Sea Battle concept. In addition to this, the U.S. Army and Marine Corps published jointly in March 2012 a concept document stressing the need for successful power projection in A2/AD environments.<sup>21</sup> The core of this concept is a cross-domain synergy between the U.S. Army and Marine Corps.

Entry operations by the Army and Marine Corps in an A2/AD environment would involve limited-objective strikes and raiding by sea-based forces, destruction of enemy A2/AD capabilities, delivery of a coup de main, seizure of ports and airfields, and establishment of expeditionary facilities to enable follow-on operations. The entry force would have two components: one for assault and one for follow-on operations. It would consist of Marine air-ground task forces (MAGTFs), Army airborne units, and Army air-assault forces. These amphibious operations would be characterized by vertical and horizontal approaches, combining the “Ship to Objective Maneuver” (STOM) and “Mounted Vertical Maneuver” (MVM), and would allow forces to operate by various means, such as assault landing or airborne approach.<sup>22</sup> It would confuse the enemy and reduce his geographical advantage. Success in the entry operation would contribute to effective dominance over the sea and air and help synergize forces.

The U.S. Marine Corps’s response to the challenge of amphibious operations in the twenty-first century started with the concept of “Operational Maneuver from the Sea” in 1996.<sup>23</sup> In May 2011 a document explaining STOM, the current, central operational concept, was completed.<sup>24</sup> In this concept paper, doctrines for amphibious operations characterized by STOM are summarized as follows:

- To treat the sea, air, and land as a unified littoral maneuvering space
- To continue to apply the single-battle concept even in the setting of a rapid operational tempo or changing operational domain
- To provide joint-force commanders with improved options among soft- and hard-power enablers
- To limit the type and number of forces ashore
- To focus equally on soft- and hard-power missions
- To emphasize maneuvering flexibility and avoid established defenses or obstacles

- To use a cross-domain approach
- To use dispersed forces
- To employ scalable landing forces
- To increase options for partnering organizations and groups
- To gain local area control for periods of time, as necessary.

In short, the effectiveness of this power-projection capability lies in its combination of MAGTFs with airborne and heliborne forces for mutual support and synergy. The Army and Marine Corps are able to contribute mutually to this joint operation by gaining and sustaining access. As summarized by Robert O. Work, then Under Secretary of the Navy, long-range arms and power-projection capabilities of the Navy and the Marine Corps would be central to U.S. military power in the future.<sup>25</sup>

Against that background, what kinds of power-projection capabilities should Japan develop? The U.S. power-projection capabilities, developed over the past hundred years and honed by nearly continuous practice, are undoubtedly the best in the world. It cannot be overstated that the United States is currently the most reliable ally of Japan. These facts underscore just how important it is for the SDF to emulate U.S. power-projection capabilities.

To achieve the best outcomes possible, the SDF must exploit its existing assets to support U.S. power-projection capabilities in a crisis. To accomplish this, it would be necessary for Japan to deploy helicopters and LCACs, combine them with airborne and heliborne units, and integrate the remaining forces, in methodologies similar to the U.S. MAGTF's, for STOM and MVM. Therefore, it is critically important to craft a robust plan to enhance the synergy between existing maritime and ground forces in times of peace rather than crisis.

The challenge, then, lies in discerning just how to combine components flexibly, and achieve operational synergy when the power required exceeds the aggregated strengths of each component now more than ever. The JMSDF is pushing the limits of its capabilities in many situations. Needed capabilities in the future, however, cannot be provided by the Ministry of Defense or the JMSDF alone. Emergent security situations call for a 360-degree response involving all facets of power a nation can bring to bear. Similarly, in an emergency, it becomes equally important for a nation to employ assets at the local level (e.g., province, state, city), in addition to national resources. In this vein, it is important for all national, state, and local entities to train and exercise together repeatedly in peacetime to accumulate knowledge and experience.

For the United States, a maritime nation with global responsibilities, the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps represent an essential component of the nation's security

force.<sup>26</sup> Operating from the sea with a multidomain force offers many advantages. The U.S. Navy and Marine Corps are designed to maintain forward presence and deliver decisive sea power on a global scale whenever and wherever needed.<sup>27</sup> The JMSDF, for its part, should fully utilize its newly acquired amphibious support capability to address common nonconventional threats in the Asia-Pacific region through multilateral cooperation. In addition, it is necessary that the JMSDF maintain its influence with forward presence, deterrence, sea control, power projection, and maritime security, which are the cores of sea power.<sup>28</sup>

### JAPAN'S RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE CONTEXT OF THE JAPAN-U.S. ALLIANCE

The significance of the Japan-U.S. alliance to developing Japan's new sea base and amphibious lift capabilities cannot be overplayed. The alliance has played a significant role in ensuring the peace, safety, and the continued independence of Japan. However, history has shown that the nature of this alliance changes from time to time. The power balance in the Asia-Pacific region is being destabilized now by the rise of China and the relative decline of the United States, indicating possibilities of both international cooperation and friction.<sup>29</sup>

In 2001, John J. Mearsheimer of the University of Chicago predicted a collision between the United States and China. He envisioned a growing role for alliances: "If a potential hegemon emerges among them, the other great powers in that region might be able to contain it by themselves, allowing the distant hegemon to remain safely on the sidelines."<sup>30</sup> Since the Cold War, an increased requirement has evolved to strengthen the Japan-U.S. cooperative relationship to cope with the rise of China, address the growing instability on the Korean Peninsula, and assuage concerns centered on the Taiwan Strait. The shared concerns of Japan and the United States resulted in the adoption of the "Japan-U.S. Joint Declaration on Security: Alliance for the 21st Century" of April 1996. In addition, a new document, "The Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation," which was revised in 1997, announced enhanced collaboration with the United States in response to an armed attack against Japan both directly and in surrounding areas that could have important influence on Japan's peace and security. In 2002, the Japan-United States Security Consultative Committee was launched to accelerate mutual consultation. On 21 June 2011, twenty-four common strategic objectives were presented.<sup>31</sup> Efforts must now be made to refine and implement these objectives in addition to deepening the alliance.

In today's Japanese security environment, multiple international actors interact in a complex manner. As such, it is not easy to understand fully the current security situation, let alone make preparations against future contingencies. If

Japan is to address these difficult challenges, complicated by history, geography, and resources, how should it adapt and change for the future?

The first key is a perspective on nonstate actors. Tsutomu Kikuchi, a professor at Aoyama Gakuin University, sees the Asia-Pacific region as a place where the theories of realism and liberalism are combined and suggests that the priority among the core values of the state (i.e., national security, economic prosperity, and political autonomy) can change according to a complicated bargaining game.<sup>32</sup> The common factor that unifies these two approaches is the pursuit of creating and maintaining order in the international system in the absence of a central overarching government. While this concept does limit itself to the state, it also envisions loose collaboration with nonstate actors, implying the possibility of steady growth in the depth and width of collaborative relationships. Research has not borne out the extent to which regimes and government can provide solutions to the various challenges facing international society, which is built primarily on the basis of the state. However, the participation of nonstate actors, such as internationally recognized entities, companies, and NGOs, as well as the coordination and cooperation of states, may point to solutions for international security issues in the future. It is important to enhance such collaborative relationships in terms of their depth and scope, through multilayered cooperative agreements that recognize the strengths of each participative entity in the grand strategy.

The second key is the effective employment of nonmilitary instruments of power, or soft power. The security environment surrounding Japan poses new complex challenges where military power is not effective or appropriate. The maritime challenges faced by Japan include piracy, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, international organized crime, major natural disasters, environmental destruction, and the need to acquire resources. Japan must ensure it retains free access to the sea lines of communication for maritime commerce. In other words, global maritime security is in Japan's national interests. At the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Regional Forum Ministerial Meeting of July 2010, then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton emphasized that "the United States, like every nation, has a national interest in freedom of navigation, open access to Asia's maritime commons."<sup>33</sup> These tangible interests are increasingly threatened and it is not possible for one nation to deal with these threats alone. Preventing the emergence of these threats through soft power is preferable to the use of kinetic force. Nevertheless, direct challenges to peace and security should be responded to in a forthright manner.

Though nation-states are still the major actors in the current international system, nonstate actors cannot be neglected. Their interests and policy measures have diversified, and many options are available to them. Therefore, a realistic

response to the new security issues is to approach them from a global point of view where order is maintained by multiagency and multilateral cooperation.

To accomplish these goals, the ability to coordinate complicated international activities and assimilate an abundance of global intelligence is required. Acquiring this capability and knowledge would broaden Japan's capabilities and improve its response capabilities to emerging crises. Japan is capable of assuming proportionate responsibility for the safety and security of the seas in the Asia-Pacific region. While China continues to expand its presence in the South China Sea and the East China Sea, a realistic approach for Japan involves the promotion of multiagency and multilateral cooperation in the maritime domain. Japan will protect its national interests through military and nonmilitary means, while pursuing a position of regional leadership. In the interim, the best way to secure regional peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region is to promote initiatives that encourage close coordination and collaboration between the Japanese military and civilian agencies in the context of the Japan-U.S. alliance. In this way Japan assumes critical new roles and responsibilities, and the Japan-U.S. alliance can be further deepened. This is an issue of the utmost urgency for Japan if it is to enhance its relationship with the United States.

#### NEW ROLES OF JMSDF: THE NCMO APPROACH

What must be done by the JMSDF to strengthen the Japan-U.S. alliance? It is critical that the JMSDF undertake concrete operational planning to implement the Air-Sea Battle concept in development by the United States. Considering the present environment, with its myriad nontraditional challenges, Japan's traditionally passive mind-set toward security will no longer be accepted by the international community. Japan will find itself increasingly isolated unless it assumes proportionate responsibility for meeting these new challenges. Given this sense of crisis, the question "What can be done now?" must be pursued in a more realistic way.

Recognizing an unfavorable legacy from World War II, Japan has resolved to address historical concerns with its neighbors and to remain committed to its stance as a peace-loving nation. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe strongly insists that Japan remain a "proactive contributor to peace."<sup>34</sup> Abe has worked tirelessly over the past few years to revitalize the Japanese nation, including its foreign and defense policies, to make it a more normal nation. At a meeting of ASEAN and Japan in Tokyo during the December 2013 "40th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation" commemoration, he stated, "We reaffirmed our enhanced commitment for the maintenance of peace, security, and stability, which is in the regional and global interests."<sup>35</sup> One of the ways in which the JMSDF can enhance

its commitment to strengthening cooperation is to pursue disaster management on an international scale.

*Joint Vision 2020* (JV 2020) is a conceptual template for full-spectrum dominance on the battlefield employed globally by U.S. joint forces.<sup>36</sup> In JV 2020, as shown in table 1, military operations are largely categorized as “war” and “military operations other than war” (MOOTW).<sup>37</sup> MOOTW include a range of both combat and noncombat operations. The areas where combat and noncombat operations overlap include peace enforcement, counterterrorism, shows of force (including raids), and noncombatant evacuation. The purely noncombat operations of MOOTW include freedom of navigation, humanitarian assistance, and protection of shipping. All these activities may be performed simultaneously or as distinct from one another.

The JMSDF must play a leading role in the purely noncombat operations of MOOTW to increase multilateral cooperation, protect its national interests, maintain freedom of navigation, and deepen its ties with the United States. A NCMO is defined as a military operation not involving combat. As stated earlier, MOOTW include combat actions, so Japanese participation in some MOOTW is prohibited by law. In contrast, a NCMO can be characterized as feasible within the framework of existing Japanese law, and the JMSDF can take more initiative in peacetime operations. Possible NCMO activities include rendering assistance to military forces employed in the pursuit of global peace, policing that contributes to the maintenance of international order, and offering humanitarian assistance in times of international disasters.

**TABLE 1**  
**THE VISION OF NCMO**

Field	Military Operations	Goals	Examples	Activities
Combat	War	Fight & win	Large-scale combat operations, attack, defend, blockade	
	Noncombat	Military operations other than war (MOOTW)	Deter war & resolve conflict	Peace enforcement counterterrorism show of force raid/strike peacekeeping/noncombatant evacuation operation nation assistance counterinsurgency
Promote peace & support civil authorities			Freedom of navigation, counterdrug, humanitarian assistance, protection of shipping, civil support	
NCMO				

Source: Prepared by the author on the basis of JV 2020.

Taking the initiative in NCMOs is advantageous in five ways. First, Japan would gain a leading position in international society by fulfilling its international obligations. Second, it would be beneficial for both Japan and the United States in the context of the Japan-U.S. alliance to share security roles. Third, it would bring benefits to international society. It is relatively easy to join NCMO activities without restriction. Participation in NCMO activities enhances multilateral cooperation and builds common background to make trust among nations. Fourth, it could be beneficial to China as well, by enabling it to participate in NCMOs and take on new international obligations of its own. Fifth, even in difficult financial circumstances, a NCMO can be conducted by utilizing existing assets.

Two challenges exist. First, a change of awareness is necessary. In other words, Japan can no longer persist in the mind-set of “It is impossible” under traditional legal restrictions but rather must build a mind-set of “Yes, it is possible,” by finding activities that are lawful under the Constitution today. A stable security environment is absolutely necessary for the existence and continued development of Japan. Without the assurance of continued stability in the region, it is impossible to sustain free maritime trade. If Japan is to continue to reap the benefits of trade in the future, it must be a proactive contributor to ensure the environment can produce these benefits. This requires Japan to take on more responsibility for security previously undertaken by the international community.

To attain these goals it will be necessary for Japan to exploit its powers of defense fully and actively. If they are utilized and practiced for peacetime actions, capabilities must be developed to respond to unexpected events while utilizing national resources more effectively in peacetime. One need look no further than the employment of U.S. military forces in a HA/DR crisis. Yoshinobu Yamamoto, a professor emeritus of the University of Tokyo, has assessed that the current international system has led to the diversification of the duties of military forces, whereby they must take increasingly dynamic action in the wake of humanitarian crises and disaster relief operations.<sup>38</sup> Japan must change its attitude concerning security from a “passive” to an “active” view—in other words, from “security afforded from the outside” to “security achieved with the collaboration of others.” In addition, it cannot be overstated that in international society, a country not actively committed to such peaceful activities is not satisfactorily fulfilling its share of responsibilities and duties required to maintain international order.

Second, to establish a global security environment, especially in the Asia-Pacific region, a NCMO should be led by the JMSDF, which is at the forefront of the defense of Japan. This objective may be difficult in the near term, given regional tensions, but it needs to be undertaken soon. For this purpose, Japan and the United States need to reapportion their roles and response capabilities in

**TABLE 2**  
**MAJOR ACTIVITIES OF NCMO**

Type	Activities
International order maintenance	Security surveillance
	Cracking down on illegal cross-border activities
	Protection of shipping
	Securing safety of navigation routes
	Maritime interdiction operations
International logistics support	Provision of supplies
	Maintenance and repair
	Transportation
	Medical services
International humanitarian assistance	Disaster relief
	Protection of noncombatants
	Medical transportation
	Search and rescue

a more effective way, on the common understanding that the peace and stability of the Asia-Pacific benefit both countries.

More specifically, roles that could be allocated between Japan and the United States are specified in table 2. Such roles include maintenance of international order (e.g., security surveillance, crackdowns on illegal cross-border activities, protection of shipping, safety of navigation routes, and maritime interdiction), international logistics support (e.g., provision of supplies, maintenance and repair, transportation, and medical services), and international humanitarian assistance (e.g., disaster relief, protection of noncombatants, medical transportation, and search and rescue).

Voluntary JMSDF participation in NCMO activities encourages Japan to take more responsibilities as a stakeholder in regional and global security. NCMO is an action-oriented approach that can be implemented in peacetime. Recently, stabilizing operations have gained increased importance for the United States as well, and the topic most emphasized is “Phase Zero,” engagement during peacetime.<sup>39</sup> This suggests that there is an opportunity for Japan to utilize its self-defense capabilities to take an active part in international military operations. Japan should address and discuss such questions as “What can be done now?” and “What *should* be done?” while taking action on the basis of the NCMO approach.

The JMSDF needs to initiate concepts and take action. It is necessary that the JMSDF change its way of thinking to “Yes, it is possible.” Likewise, the JMSDF must actively offer the international community increased options for Japanese involvement that do not violate Japan’s Constitution but improve the regional security environment. Increased NCMO actions and initiatives would enable Japan to enhance its standing in international society while presenting an image of a responsible state.

Considering the growing importance of coalition operations, the JMSDF should add a renewed importance to the significance of the Japan-U.S. alliance, which is the foundation to security in the Asia-Pacific region. The alliance, which continues to build on “values and benefits,” blossoms into one that includes mutually beneficial “actions.”

E. H. Carr, an authoritative author in the field of international politics, once remarked, “It remains true that a new international order and a new international harmony can be built up only on the basis of an ascendancy that is generally accepted as tolerant and unoppressive or, at any rate, as preferable to any practicable alternative.”<sup>40</sup> Today, in an age of a diversifying multilateral framework, the JMSDF must play an increasingly significant role in the formation of that international order.

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#### NOTES

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The term “nontraditional security” is used in this article as defined by the U.S. Naval War College’s China Maritime Studies Institute (CMSI) and the 2013 Japanese white paper *Defense of Japan*, published by the Ministry of Defense. CMSI mentions terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, piracy, environmental crisis, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, ethnic strife, and economic dislocation as nontraditional security concerns; Lyle J. Goldstein, ed., *Not Congruent but Quite Complementary: U.S. and Chinese Approaches to Nontraditional Security*, China Maritime Study 9 (Newport, R.I.: Naval War College Press, July 2012), p. 2. *Defense of Japan* too lists nontraditional security areas such as humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, antipiracy measures, and maritime security; Japan Ministry of Defense, *Defense of Japan 2013* (Tokyo: July 2013), pp. 2, 225, 238, available at [www.mod.go.jp/](http://www.mod.go.jp/).
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